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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the proceedings of a day-long conference for adult literacy practitioners in Toronto. The conference addressed the many ways in which education can become more inclusive of adult learners. During the seven different workshops, participants explored questions of "voice." Common concerns included the following: (1) many people are denied choices and chances in education because of their culture, language, race, gender, physical disability, or economic class; (2) adult literacy, basic education, English-as-a-Second-Language, and mother tongue literacy classes are forced to operate with inadequate resources, support, and funding; and (3) adult learners must be actively consulted when programs are developed for them, in order to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of the literacy learners. The report covers the seven workshop themes: empowering language; addressing sexism; integrating adults with disabilities; furthering cross-cultural communication; understanding illiteracy and poverty; challenging racism; and advocating mother tongue instruction. Accounts of the morning and afternoon sessions are followed by an excerpt from an essay titled "Musing with Mothertongue." A summary of the evaluations and 15 references can be found at the end of the report. (KC)

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Speaking Our Own Voice

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE HELD IN TORONTO FOR LITERACY PRACTITIONERS ON NOVEMBER 26, 1988

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— Tannis Atkinson
Addressing Sexism
— Margaret Wells
— Sally McBeth
Integrating Adults with Disabilities
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Furthering Cross-Cultural Communication
— Alok Mukherjee
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Understanding Illiteracy and Poverty
— Arlene Mantle
— Nomi Wall
Challenging Racism
— Arun Mukherjee
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Advocating for Mother Tongue
— Evelyn Murialdo
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PREFACE: QUOTES FROM THE DAY

"Facilitators must recognize that we are not speaking the same voice as the poor — we speak our own voice."

"Music...is a good way to make people become aware of rhythm and the heartbeat, and to consciously think about how they do and say things."

"Educational equity is needed in the same way we have needed employment equity: to ensure that certain groups of people are not excluded from the mainstream."

"Even when you're locked in a corner, you can do something: sow seeds of doubt - that's enough for adult learners. They'll go out and work for their own learning."

"Big men use big words
to big men and women
But you want something simple
that can explain itself."

Birth Poem

© by Lillian Allen

This Little Girl mi call Anta
This Little Girl mi call Anta
This Little Girl mi call Anta
Ah ah ah ah

Mi pregnant in mi belly
An mi head full a jelly
An mi vamit an mi sleep
An mi tired and mi eat
An mi vamit an mi sleep
An mi sigh
LAWD
Jah alone know Jah alone know
Jah alone know
Mi never knew it so rough
Mi never know sey it so tough
An this little girl, she wouldn't
Come a minute before she
ready fi born
An the month them pass
An mi poutview lost, lost, lost...
An mi labour an mi labour an mi labour
An mi labour an mi labour
An mi bawl

Whai

This little girl wouldn't come a second before she ready fi born
an mi labour an mi labour an mi labour
an mi labour an mi labour an mi labour

It hat yu see
It dread yu see
An mi labour an mi labour an mi labour
An mi labour an mi labour an mi labour
An mi bawl Whai
An mi push an mi push an mi push
An mi push an mi push an mi push
A MI PUSH

An baps she born
An it nice yu see
an she sweet yu see
This little girl we call Anta
This little girl we call Anta
This little girl we call Anta
This little girl we call Anta ah ah ah ah

One Poem Town

© by Lillian Allen

Hey! Hey! Hey!
this is a one poem town
this is a one poem town
ride in on your macramed verses
through barber green mind
keep it kool! kool! kool!
on the page
cause, if you bring one in
any other way
we'll shoot you with metaphors
tie you cordless
hang you high in ironies
drop a pun pon yu toe
and run you down, down, down
and out of town
cause, this is a one poem town
and hey! What you doing in here anyway?
So don't come with no pling, ying, jing
ding something
calling it poetry
cause this is a one poem town
and you're not here to stay?!
Are you?

INTRODUCTION

Speaking Our Own Voice was a day-long conference for adult literacy practitioners in Toronto. The conference addressed the many ways in which education can become more inclusive of adult learners. Participants were asked to reflect on their own experience, to give voice to their questions, and to discover how we can, together, ensure that our literacy practice helps adults to speak their own voice.

The two facilitators who chaired the day's events were Lillian Allen, a nationally-acclaimed poet and Jenny Horsman, a feminist educator and literacy activist. Lillian and Jenny introduced the day and brought participants together between the morning and afternoon sessions and again at the end of the day.

During the seven different workshops, participants explored questions of "voice". Common concerns came up in many of the sessions:

1. Many people are denied choices and chances in education because of their culture, language, race, gender, physical disability or economic class. There are still too many barriers preventing people from getting a basic education.

2. Adult literacy, basic education, English as a Second Language and mother tongue literacy classes are forced to operate with inadequate resources, support and funding.

3. Adult learners must be actively consulted when programs are developed for them. This is the best way to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of the literacy learners.

The morning workshop sessions provided an opportunity for participants to think more deeply about each issue. The educators who facilitated the morning sessions were all people with the knowledge and experience to help literacy practitioners further their understanding of these various issues, see where and how to build alliances, begin to develop pedagogy, and take responsibility for the issue within a literacy context. The afternoon workshop sessions were designed to give participants the opportunity to confer with other literacy practitioners and explore ways of addressing the issue within their own literacy practice.

This report is intended as a document of the day. We hope it will allow people who were unable to attend to get a sense of the questions raised at the *Speaking Our Own Voice* conference.

The report covers each workshop theme. Accounts of the morning and afternoon sessions are followed by a reading chosen from another publication. A summary of the evaluations of the day and suggestions for next year's conference can be found at the end of the report.

Before the workshop sessions began, participants were told:

"Go challenge yourself into the day, to give birth to new ideas, new ways of relating, and new and renewed possibilities."

We hope you will enjoy the report of this challenging and inspiring day.

EMPOWERING LANGUAGE

MORNING SESSION

Resource Person: Lillian Allen is a central figure in Canadian culture as a nationally-acclaimed poet and a community activist.

Lillian began her presentation by describing her education in Jamaica. The education system in Jamaica was based on the British system and did not acknowledge that language and cultural differences existed between Jamaica and England. She asked participants to describe their personal educational experiences. Lillian described her experience as an educator:

"I do not do one-to-one work, as I firmly believe that empowerment and learning are collective matters. To begin to work with a group of people, the first thing I do is talk: exchanging stories is important. I get to know the people in the group as individuals, make human contact, meet outside of the class setting. In group work, I use questions as the basis for our work. To me, the role of the facilitator is to do research, provide information that would otherwise be inaccessible to those in the group.

A group can effectively build consciousness. As a facilitator, I cannot express things for the people I am working with, but I can be in solidarity with them. As the group shares with me, I try to create something out of their problems, feelings and needs. They get strength from speaking out.

I worked with one group called "Mothers Against Discrimination". The group had been organized by several women in Ontario Housing who felt the need to talk and support one another. They began to see that fighting among themselves was not the solution to their problems. Mothers Against Discrimination campaigned for their civic right to be properly housed. A group of 25 women approached Ontario Housing. These women found that by confronting the system they were able to get a change in policy. The group continues to offer a support system to women in the area.

Giving voice is an interactive process. I cannot separate giving voice from writing. I start by finding out what the people in the group like: poems, stories, songs. I get them to imitate these, as a first step towards developing their own voice. I support and validate their efforts. Sometimes I use music because people are comfortable with music. It is also a good way to make people become aware of rhythm and the heartbeat, and become to consciously think about how they do and say things.

What are the steps to giving voice?

1. Begin with discussions. As the facilitator, start byposing questions.

2. Set up a role play to suggest ways for taking action.

3. Do the role play again, in an overexaggerated way. This prepares people to do and say it with commitment.

4. Have the dialogue written out. Either select one or two people in the group to do the writing or have a writing exercise for everybody (have them recreate in words what just happened). You could also record the dialogue and then have someone in the group transcribe the tape.

Work, analysis, reflection: these are the steps for the facilitator and for the group.

There is power in a group setting. The facilitator has the responsibility and the obligation to acknowledge and deal with the power. This includes the responsibility to point out bias. When we challenge bias in our class, we have to do more in the wider community to work on issues. I talk,

read, and work with different people. Networking is also important for the facilitator. I find out what others are doing, and try to organize joint projects. There are many people available who can help us.

EMPOWERING LANGUAGE

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Tannis Atkinson has been involved in a number of adult literacy programs and networks. She facilitates workshops on clear language and design.

The following is a summary of the afternoon discussion.

How can we, as facilitators, deal with the fact that the language is constantly changing and evolving?

There are many pressures to teach correct syntax and correct pronunciation. E.S.L. students often say they speak the language badly, that they want to get rid of their accent. The popular assumption in Canada that everyone must learn English prevents many immigrants from succeeding. A focus on pronunciation ignores the issue of discrimination based on language (for example, in the case of immigrants whose credentials are not accepted here because of language). There are many pressures to teach language for jobs, for employment. Is this really what the learners need?

What materials exist that are culturally sensitive and relevant?

Learners need more access to written materials that use clear language and design. Learners need to be involved in deciding what the class will do. How do we deal with learner writing? What is the balance between not tampering at all with the learner's words, and rewriting our definition of a correct version? We as facilitators need to remember that different forms of writing serve different purposes.

How can we further the discussion of empowering language?

- Encourage learners to write their own words and then to read what they have written.
- Help encourage learners to take risks in their learning.
- Sensitize learners to bias: encourage them to look critically at material, and realize that the errors and inaccuracies are in the material, not in their interpretation of it.
- Negotiate with learners: find out their expectations and decide how they can be met within the class.

RECOMMENDATIONS
How can the Toronto Board of Education support facilitators in this work?

1. Help facilitators get hold of the good, clearly-written materials that are available.

2. Change the system for ordering materials. Have sample materials available, possibly in a book-mobile. Ensure that facilitators are paid for the time they spend ordering materials and using the resource centres.

3. Provide more funding for materials for E.S.L. and literacy classes. The yearly funding for a class is $150. This is not adequate.

4. Provide more opportunities for facilitators to share their experiences and get to know one another.

5. Provide facilitators with

information and training to assist in getting learners more involved.

READING
"This is What William Wanted to Say"

The following is an excerpt from a discussion by adult literacy learners at the Gatehouse Project in England. Cloetta, Roslyn, Chris and William speak eloquently about the experience of having their words changed by a person with more education (in this case, a tutor). This excerpt is reprinted with permission from **Opening Time**, published by The Gatehouse Project (Manchester, U.K., 1986).

Cloetta: Oh William. You
don't speak like that
do you?

Roslyn: It's completely
wrong.
It's not in your
words.

William: He tried to put big
words in.
And I don't want big
words.
You understand.
You want something
that people can read
after me
and understand
what it say.
Big words.
Big men use big
words
to big men and
women
But you want some-
thing simple
that can explain
itself.

Cloetta: You see he doesn't
put what you tell
him.

Chris: Some people seem to
think
that what they say
is better than what
you say
It's you who knows
about this.
It's only you.
I mean, you've got
that information.
We haven't got it
so we should learn
from what you can
tell us.

William: I mean I grow up,
I was born and grow
up
on plantation
and I know about
coffee,
pimento and all
those things
I talking about.
I know about sugar
cane.
And everything that
I know
I try to explain to
him
but he don't want to
hear
what I said.

•••

ADDRESSING SEXISM

MORNING SESSION

***Resource person:** Margaret Wells was a secondary school teacher for 18 years and has been a volunteer in literacy. She is currently acting co-ordinator of Women's Studies and Labour Studies for the Toronto Board of Education.*

The Toronto Board of Education is taking steps to adopt and develop curriculum which challenges the notion of traditional sex roles and provides examples of non-sexist role models for both boys and girls. Margaret cited several examples:

- "Boys for Babies" is a program for boys in grades five to six. Babies from the community are brought into the classroom by their mothers and the boys learn how to feed, change and play with them. Despite an initial reluctance, the boys have responded very enthusiastically to the program.

- "Snakes and Snails" is a program of drama and writing which takes the children into the community to explore non-traditional work for men (for example, men in nurturing roles).

Another approach which has been adopted is to infuse women's material into the school curriculum.

- "Framing Our Lives" is a package on Canadians at work which includes extensive information on women's work, including material on women's paid work in Canada in the early twentieth century.

In order to open up educational and career opportunities for girls, the Board is offering programs that encourage girls to continue studies in mathematics, science and technology, and also to consider non-traditional careers.

- "Family Math" is a package developed in the United States in response to findings that success in math for girls appears to improve when there is a family connection. This program provides practical applications of math that the teacher can work on with the family or that the family itself can use at home.

- The "Job Sites" program gives students the opportunity to observe a woman mentor in a non-traditional work place.

- The "Horizons" conferences for girls in grades seven to eight encourage girls to continue math and science courses.

The Board is also encouraging schools to address women's issues through various kinds of theatre and arts activities, such as the "Working Women's Picture Show" by the Company of Sirens.

Workshop participants discussed some of the problems and questions, including the issues raised when "girls-only" or "boys-only" programs are offered, the need to work with teachers, and the need to look at the way in which maths and sciences are being taught. Participants felt that "Framing Our Lives" and "Family Math" might be adapted for use in adult literacy programs.

Margaret noted that an area of major concern within the school system is the need to overcome sex bias in teacher-student interaction. Research, such as that done by the Sadkers at the Mid-Atlantic Centre for Sex Equity in Washington, indicates that teachers respond differently to male and female students. Male students get more attention than female students and have more intellectual exchanges with teachers. Research also indicates that girls who do well get the least attention in the school classroom. The Sadkers are developing classroom observation tools and training programs to assist

teachers to close the gender gap in communication in the classroom.

Margaret highlighted the isolation of teachers. To acknowledge and address sex bias in teaching, she suggests that teachers might observe other teachers in the classroom and might also do more team teaching.

In developing non-sexist teaching, teachers need to be aware of the significance of language. Workshop participants viewed a clip from a video entitled "A Word in Edgewise" which explored the influence of male dominance in relation to language and grammar. Participants were surprised to learn that our current grammatical practice of using the singular pronoun "he" in a sentence where the singular is required — and not the plural "they" which encompasses both sexes — was legislated into place only 100 years ago.

As we begin to develop feminist curriculum, we face the need to re-think our concept of knowledge, the role of the learner, and the role of the teacher. Margaret noted that feminist women are beginning to make progress in this area and that, more recently, there are some men as well. John P. Miller, for example, has developed a theory of teaching strategies which he calls "holistic curriculum". In particular, Margaret noted the work of Belenky et al. (**Women's Ways of Knowing**) who present the notion of teacher as midwife.

What can we, as facilitators, do?

1. Negotiate with adult learners.

2. Acknowledge that we may not know the experiences of others, may not understand, may not be able to see when learning is taking place.

3. Increase co-operation between schools and adult literacy programs.

4. Consider whether we, as feminists, teachers or literacy practitioners, can assert our own fundamental values, even if those values may challenge social norms in our own culture and in other cultures.

ADDRESSING SEXISM

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Sally McBeth recently co-facilitated a women's discussion group and published a book for learners called ***My Name is Rose.*** *She has been a member of the East End Literacy staff collective since 1983.*

During the afternoon session, Sally encouraged participants to think about how they, as educators, put their feminist convictions into practice. Sally had participants discuss case studies based on her work with women. The following is a summary of the discussion.

Why are so many literacy workers women?

- So much of literacy work is volunteer work and women make up the majority of volunteers.
- Women fill many nurturing roles, and are in "nurturing ghettos" in the paid work force.
- Much of the literacy work is part-time contract work. This offers mothers their required flexibility.
- Women have a vested interest in education.

What are the barriers which keep women from learning to read and write?

- lack of childcare
- lack of transportation for

themselves and their children

- emotional abuse or violence from spouse
- poverty
- isolation
- being tired or unhealthy
- lack of adequate housing
- being medicated (more women than men are medicated)
- being coerced by the welfare structure or the penal system

How can we develop feminist literacy programming?

- find out about women's support networks in the area
- learn how to counsel a woman in crisis and how to make crisis referrals
- be aware of which barriers listed above affect the program
- programs should be lenient with absenteeism and lateness
- programs should encourage peer support

RECOMMENDATIONS

What would an ideal feminist literacy program be like?

1. It would bring education to women.

2. It would provide access to flexible, quality childcare appropriate to each woman.

3. It would be in a setting that has grace, beauty, and that reflects the value of women and fosters pride of ownership in the learners. It would be a legitimate learning place.

4. It would have community control of funding so that external intervention does not impinge on the program.

READING: "My Name is Deborah Sims"

The following is one woman's story. This excerpt is taken from a brief she submitted to the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues on June 20, 1987. It is reprinted from "East End Literacy: A Women's Discussion Group" by Sally McBeth and Vivian Stollmeyer, published in **Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme**, Volume 9, Number 3 & 4 (York University, Toronto, 1988).

My name is Deborah Sims. I am 31 years old, a single mother raising two young children. When I was a child, I had polio and did not have the opportunity to get an education. When my older daughter was five, I tried to get my grade one but the Board of Education refused me because I was an adult and not a child. I did not know what to do but I went to a day school and quickly found out it was too advanced. I did not know enough. I tried another school but it did not suit me.

Three years ago someone referred me to East End Literacy because I could not fill out a form for an apartment and, in a matter of weeks, I had a volunteer tutor who came to my home.

In 1985, I had my second child; it seemed to work out fine because I worked with my tutor when my daughter slept, but I cannot do that anymore because she is older and more active. She needs daycare. My volunteer tutor is only available two hours a week. The only suitable daycare I can find will not accept my daughter for only two hours a week since the minimum time is five hours. I have to pay $100 a month out of my Family Benefits Allowance for this service. That is a lot of money out of my monthly income of $600. It's strange but if I was in a class for 25 hours a week, I could be subsidized for daycare. I have tried to get into a 25 hour/week program but I have been refused because I am not yet at a grade five level...

In the meantime, I wish there was more financial help for daycare while I have my two hours of tutoring a week. There are a lot of women in the same position as I am, who need daycare while they are working with a tutor."

•••

INTEGRATING ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

MORNING SESSION

Resource Person: Tracy Carpenter Odell is the author of ***The Right to Read: A Tutor's Handbook****. She is a consultant on access for people with disabilities at the Ministry of Skills Development.*

Tracy began by discussing educational equity:

Educational equity is needed in the same way we have needed employment equity: to ensure that certain groups of people are not excluded from the mainstream.

All people have a right to an education and deserve to have a quality education, regardless of the person's handicapping condition. Through early diagnosis and intervention, we cap the potential of children too soon. These children often grow up to be adults who were never given a chance to learn.

As an example, I was not allowed to go to my neighbourhood school in Ottawa, where I grew up. The principal said that he did not want to be held responsible if I got hurt in a scrap and that the teachers could not be expected to carry me from class to class or take me to the bathroom. We were too poor to afford a wheelchair; we had no means of transportation. I was stuck. Next, my family took me to the local school for disabled children. But they didn't want me either: you see, they were new and they were trying to demonstrate through statistics that disabled children would improve at their school. Since I have a form of muscular dystrophy, my disability would never improve. They wanted their students to come in using wheelchairs and eventually learn to walk with crutches, or come in on crutches and progress to canes. That just wasn't possible for me, and so I was also rejected from the special school.

I had grade one at home and by grade two I was sent to a residential school (hospital, really) in Toronto where I could at least attend class and where a wheelchair would be supplied. Because the focus was on rehabilitation, we lost a lot of school time to therapy and doctor's visits. Our school day was shorter and we only studied three subjects: reading, spelling and math. By the time I was ready for high school, I had my three R's, but I had no experience in many other subjects — history, geography, science, sociology, biology, art, music, languages, etc. I had a lot of catching up to do in grade 9.

I had no opportunity at the hospital to learn how to take care of myself. In an institutional setting such as that, you are never responsible for yourself and must always bend to authority. I was not permitted to take the "life skills" classes and learn how to cook, budget, or look after my needs. It was presumed that this would all be done for me.

By the time I was old enough to leave the hospital, I had finished high school and was starting university. I went to live in an apartment where support services were offered to assist me with all those daily living tasks. I had to teach myself how to direct my care so the staff could understand what I needed, why I needed it and how they could assist me. I had to learn how to look after my own needs: paying bills, planning meals, maintaining old friendships and making new ones. None of this was considered a valuable part of my "curriculum" in the institution, not in class or out of it.

We have to look at good models: I know a young boy named Billy who is not much older today than I was when I left home to go live in a hospital. It shouldn't be surprising that Billy is in his local school, integrated with all the other kids his age, until you know that he uses a wheelchair, that he doesn't speak, and he is learning how to communicate "yes" and "no" by moving his hands. This is only surprising because we so seldom see such excellent

models of education.

While Billy's classmates learn heritage Italian, Billy has therapy. While Billy's classmates have reading class, kids take turns sitting on the floor with Billy, reading aloud to him. All the kids benefit because the teacher has been willing to think through her curriculum creatively enough that Billy is as involved as he can be, and the rest of the students are involved with Billy in a way that benefits them academically and socially. Happily I relate this story, although with some irony, because Billy, whose handicaps interfere with his learning so much more than mine, was not institutionalized to get an education. Not only that, but he'll leave school having the experience his peers have, and a lot of life savvy as well.

We have to seek out and imitate the best models. And then we have to continually improve on them.

Dr. Lou Brown, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, is committed to integrating students at the primary and secondary school levels, and to teaching work skills to children from an early age, no matter how handicapped they may be. Lou teaches a very simple, but powerful lesson.

If someone learns slowly, then we have to take more time to teach. We also have to make sure that the learning environment is rich and interesting and dynamic. Billy, for example, will never learn to speak or communicate ideas if he is forever locked away in a segregated class where the only person who can talk is the teacher. He's got a much better chance of learning this if he is surrounded by chatty children his age, who share his interests and who can interact with him.

If someone forgets easily, then we have to make more opportunities to rehearse what is learned, and we have to make sure that time to practice occurs daily (i.e. school doesn't close in the summer).

If someone is only going to be able to learn a few things, then we must be sure that we teach that which is useful and relevant; we have a responsibility not to waste that person's time with useless information that will have no impact on his or her life.

That's educational equity.

In a book called **They All Spoke Sign Language** we learn about a society that did not discriminate against people who were deaf. It is a sociological study of a community called "Martha's Vineyard" off the coast of Maine. In this community, about 150 years ago, a high percentage (10-15%) of the population had hearing impairments. Spontaneously and quite naturally, everyone in the town, even those who could hear, used sign language to communicate. Now sign was not just used when a deaf person was around, it was used between hearing people as well. On this isolated island, sign language became the preferred medium for communication. People used sign when talking in their sleep! The citizens who did have hearing impairments were so readily assimilated into their communities, that data collection was a challenge. Deafness was not considered a significant enough handicap to mention on health records. Because everyone used sign language, the people with hearing impairments were not considered handicapped and no one suffered rejection and exclusion because of deafness. This story forces us to rethink our notions of handicaps. Are people handicapped because a certain condition makes it so? Or are people handicapped because we tyrannically impose conditions that make it so? What would our world be like if we all spoke sign language?

What can facilitators do towards educational equity?

1. To teach people who have developmental or other handicaps effectively, the instructor requires a profound understanding of the societal and attitudinal factors which compound the actual handicap.

2. The instructor must be very positive and maintain a firm belief in the learner's ability to learn.

3. The same good teaching practices used for non-handicapped learners will work with learners who have disabilities.

4. The instructor must encourage intense involvement and learner participation.

5. Sensible adaptations must be made to course content, pacing, trials and practice runs according to the learner's strengths, interests and life situations.

6. The sessions should be stimulating and fun for both the learner and the teacher. If this is so, you're on the right track.

7. Find out more about the organizations and resource people that can help. Copies of a listing of contacts are available from Tracy.

INTEGRATING ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Ed Wadley is the literacy program co-ordinator at Frontier College. He has been working in literacy for six years with a variety of learners: people on probation and parole, people who are labelled with an intellectual handicap, and individuals who are physically disabled.

In the afternoon session, participants learned from each other's work and issues. The group was interested in sharing their addresses with each other as a peer support mechanism. The following is a summary of the discussion.

What are the barriers we face when working with adults with disabilities?

- lack of funding for interpreters, equipment and computers
- lack of information on disabilities — many people still emphasize people's deficiencies rather than their strengths and many people with disabilities are isolated
- the need for training in the technologies which can assist people with disabilities
- physical barriers and lack of transportation
- lack of materials that use Braille and large print or that are audio-visual

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can we, as facilitators, do?

1. Listen more to what learners say they want to do, and how they want to do it.

2. Stop segregating students. Change the model of group work in literacy so that students with disabilities are included and so that supports for students with disabilities are built into classes and groups.

3. Remove the question: "Are you willing to tutor a learner with a disability?" from the tutor application form inrecognition of the fact that we have a responsibility to assist all of our learners.

4. Include deaf learners in literacy programs.

5. Stop being protective about mixing disabled students with their non-disabled peers.

READING: "Roots of Exclusion"

The following is based on an essay, "The Roots of Exclusion", by Charles Galloway. It traces the history of education and institutions for people with disabilities.

This excerpt is reprinted with permission.

Institutionalization is a relatively new concept. It

emerged in the mid 1800's as a way to assist people back into the community. The people organizing these institutions intended to make them beneficial to the people served and were optimistic that with a favourable environment, people would be cured and able to succeed in their communities once again.

This plan met with only partial success, and so the attitude shifted to one of charitable benevolence. It was recognized that while not everyone could be cured, they could at least be cared for. It was not long before another devastating leap was taken in this ideology. We never give charity for long before we begin to question who deserves it. Were these *our* handicapped people or someone else's? How much money should we spend? Won't the public object if we give them too much? Why should we worry about taking good care of them? After all, they aren't used to fine things and decent food. We can do it cheaply.

Through this line of reason, institutions became bigger, because it was seen as more economical, and services rapidly deteriorated. People were institutionalized to protect them from a society that was harsh and ignorant of their disabilities; but eventually, the arguments given for institutionalization became focused on protecting society from the handicapped person who was both a menace and an insult to the sensibilities of the rest of society.

By 1925, work was being done in the area of eugenics to build a better society. We were making an effort to genetically improve our race, in the same way that other dictators would attempt to do so later. Laws were drawn forbidding citizens with handicaps to marry and have children; IQ tests were developed as a way of screening out classes of people from the better schools; people with handicaps were legally sterilized. It was a brutal, hysterical time which was short-lived, predominantly because these rigid rules could not be systematically enforced.

Yet we do have remnants of this thinking influencing policy today. It is this kind of unconscious, historical attitude that is being fought with new laws that allow children with handicaps into the mainstream and that reinforce basic human rights for all citizens, regardless of any handicapping condition.

From the 1930's to the 1970's, we tended to drift on course. Institutions were still the prevalent mode of servicing people who had handicaps, and over this time, we entrenched our commitment to institutions. Large numbers of staff were employed by these institutions and had an investment in keeping them open. No counter-ideologies were being presented. Parents of children with handicaps were encouraged to institutionalize their children to prevent themselves embarrassment, pain and the extra burden that these children presented. Parents had no other recourse, because all services were tied to these institutions: wheelchairs would be purchased for children who lived in hospitals, not for children who lived at home. For those few parents who were willing to swim upstream by keeping their children at home, they found that the financial burden became the deciding factor.

Only recently, have we seen a strengthening voice declaring that alternate services are essential to people's dignity and well being. People are integrated and working alongside each other at school and the workplace. Only recently are we beginning to see increased tolerance of people who are different, for whatever reason. Some of us are willing to make room and then some of us still need to be convinced, but it is happening.

We are building an alternate perception of a person with a handicap as a "developing citizen". We add supports as needed to enhance life, and some small pockets of people are working hard to determine which supports really are beneficial, outside of the psychological investment in institutional delivery mechanisms.

That's education equity.

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FURTHERING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

MORNING SESSION

Resource Person: Alok Mukherjee, Race Relations Advisor to the Toronto Board of Education, conducts training programs on issues of race and culture in education.

Alok began by relating his story:

"I was the only non-white in my university program and I was required to take one more course than the others. I confronted the professor, 'Have you chosen to ask me to do this because I am an Indian?' This question provoked an investigation. The course was dropped, the conflict was deflected. I assumed that the professor had concerns about my educational background. It was helpful to confront the concerns head-on."

Alok asked participants to look around and describe what is dominant in this society. The group brainstorm came up with the following:

Race:	White
Ethnicity:	White Anglo-Saxon Protestant; Homogeneous
Religion:	Christian
Language:	English
Class:	Middle upper
Gender:	Male
Geographical Origin:	Europe or U.S.A.
Age:	30's, youth
Sexuality:	Heterosexuality
Influence of Other Culture:	Food, clothes
Ability:	Success, survival of the fittest
Family:	Nuclear
Other:	Consumerism; Political Affiliation, either Liberal or Conservative

The dominant identities have been the same for over a hundred years. Society is changing: it is becoming more multi-cultural and multi-religious. Still, these stereotypes are hard to change. Because communication is a two-way process, stereotypes interfere. Cross-cultural communication is not just an individual encounter but reflects the larger social structures. It is affected by assumptions on both sides.

Alok handed out case studies based on incidents at the Toronto Board of Education. Participants broke into three groups to look at the issues and to discuss what steps they would take to deal with these issues. A common theme that emerged was that mutual respect and understanding can develop through confrontation and discussion. Often organizations perpetuate assumptions and misunderstandings by not confronting differences and difficulties.

FURTHERING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Alexandra Henriques is a trainer of cross-cultural awareness. She is an adult educator with the Toronto Board of Education and facilitates English in the work place.

During the afternoon session, Alexandra asked participants to examine the cultural value placed on literacy in this society. The following is a summary of the discussion.

What are notions of literacy in Canada?

- literacy means education, 'the three R's'
- literacy is power
- literacy is the door to a better life, a passport to success, it helps in the job market
- literacy allows people to be independent
- literacy gives people access to information
- literacy makes you dependent on print

What are notions of illiteracy in Canada?

- there is no illiteracy in Canada
- illiteracy means little or no education
- illiteracy is equated with poverty and powerlessness
- illiterate adults are seen as unsophisticated, simple, ignorant, stupid, isolated, dependent on others, afraid of the world
- illiterate adults are assumed to be unemployed, 'unskilled', or in poorly paid jobs
- illiterate adults are ingenious

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can we, as facilitators, do?

1. Establish trust with the learners: they must believe thatliteracy will be beneficial to them.

2. Respect the learners for what they know, and acknowledge that the learners may know things that we do not know.

3. Be aware of the psychological hardships that illiterate adults face.

4. Be aware that learners may not have the support of their families or peers.

5. Teach things which are relevant, which have an aim, a purpose.

READING: "Why Should We Become Literate"

The following is an excerpt from a prose poem written by a group of poor and illiterate people in West Bengal, India. The poem, "Why Should We Become Literate", was adopted by participants at the International Seminar on Literacy in Industrialized Countries in October of 1987. This excerpt is reprinted with permission from **Literacy in the Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice**, published by the International Council for Adult Education (Toronto, 1988).

What kind of people are we?
We are poor, very poor —
but we are not stupid.
That is why, despite our
illiteracy, we
still exist.
But we have to know
why we should become literate.

We joined the literacy classes
before
but after some time, we got

wise.
We felt cheated - so we left
the classes.
...
To sign one's name means
nothing.
Or to read a few words means
nothing.

We agree to join the classes
If you teach us how not to
depend
on others any more.
...
We are not empty pitchers.
We have a mind of our own.
We can reason out things,
and, believe it or not
we also have dignity.
Let those who will teach us
remember this.

We have enough trouble and
sufferings.
Why should we add to them
by
joining literacy classes?
...
And yet, something more
we don't get a square meal.
We have few clothes.
We don't have a proper shelter.
And, to top it all, floods come
and wash away
everything, then comes a long
spell of drought,
drying up everything.

Would it help us if we became
literate?
...
Literacy should help us live
better -
at least we look at it that way.

They say that things are
being planned
for us - the poor.
Would literacy help us in
knowing
those government plans?

Would it help us know
how to raise our yield and
increase our income?
And from where could we
borrow money on easy
terms, and what benefits
would we get from the
co-operatives?

Would we get better seeds,
fertilizer and all the water
we need? Would we get
proper wages?
All this we think is learning
for living.
They say that the new programme
promises us all this.
But, is it only writing on a
scrap of paper?
Is it like one of those very
many past promises
that were never kept?

Will this programme teach us
how to think and work together?
Will 'doing' be made a part of
'learning'?
If all this is done, all of us
will join the literacy classes, it
will then be
learning to live a better life.
...

They say that there are laws
to protect
and benefit us. We don't
know these laws,
we are kept in the dark.
Would literacy help us know
these laws?
Would we know the laws that
had changed
the status of women? And the
laws that
protect the tribals among us?
We want a straight answer.

Then shall we decide whether
we should become literate or
not.
But if we find out that we are
being duped again
with empty promises,
we will stay away from you.

We will say,
'For God's sake, leave us
alone.'

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UNDERSTANDING LITERACY AND POVERTY

MORNING SESSION

Resource Person: Arlene Mantle is a singer, songwriter, activist, and educator. She uses music as a tool to help people understand women's poverty.

In her presentation, Arlene focused on two questions: "What is poverty?" and "Who is poverty?"

What does poverty look like?

- no access to education (or, the poor are streamed out)
- no choice
- no access to information
- no access to power and a voice
- most poor people are women

What is the problem?

- Our society believes that individuals can advance if they work and study hard enough.
- The education system serves rich people best.
- The problem is bigger than the education system.
- People in crisis cannot easily analyze their situation.
- Parents are disempowered, which makes it difficult for them to empower their children.

The education system perpetuates these problems. It focuses on 'experts' — which tend to be white and male — and leaves people not believing their own experience and inner authority.

Educators have a choice: to perpetuate the status quo or to develop critical consciousness.

What is the strategy?

The poor say to educators, "give us your resources, not your analysis".

It is difficult to work with a group that does not share a common experience, and is grouped according to academic criteria.

Everyone, regardless of class, needs validation as an individual. We are all different. People need to work together to name and reflect on our individual and collective experience.

When people name the conditions of our own reality, we see the differences and similarities between us.

UNDERSTANDING ILLITERACY AND POVERTY

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Nomi Wall is an adult educator and social activist. She is currently a literacy facilitator at the Regent Park Project.

During the afternoon session, participants continued the discussion of illiteracy and poverty. Participants began to recognize that facilitators do not speak the same voice as the poor — we speak our own voice. What we can do is equalize the relationship from the start. As well, we can ensure that literacy classes and programs come from immediate needs within the community.

What are the constraints on literacy facilitators?

- Literacy programs have a right to exist. Yet, the shortage of funding means we must always rationalize the program according to the criteria of the funders, not the learners. There is a focus on levels and the number of learners who pass through the program rather than on the real needs of the learners.
- There is no movement for social change.
- The poor are seen as a minority group. There is still a lot of prejudice about poverty (including blaming the victim).
- Education is tied to the economy rather than to people's ne ¹s. As a result, curriculum is imposed, not holistic.
- Many literacy learners work in oppressive conditions. The acquisition of literacy skills will not automatically change that.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can we, as facilitators, do to challenge the institutions?

1. Ignore the constraints.
2. Develop affinity groups.
3. Identify progressive ideas and people and work with them.
4. Develop on-going programs and referrals.

READING: "Literacy Together"

The following song, "Literacy Together", was written in a collective session with literacy learners, tutors and workers organized by the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. Music and lyric facilitation was by Arlene Mantle, who can be contacted through On the Line Music Collective, c/o Bathurst Street Centre for Peace and Justice, 736 Bathurst Street, # 212, Toronto M5S 2R4. Phone (416) 537-7702 or 537-5631.

September 8th is Literacy Day
All over the world
In Canada we've got something to say
And we're going to be heard
We all need to read and write
For this right we'll stand and fight
They'll hear us around the world tonight

We've all come from different places
Our lives aren't written on our faces

We each have a different story to tell
As children we all attended your schools
Tried our best and broke no rules
For us education was a living hell

We're workers, learners, mothers, fathers,
Some volunteers who took the time to bother
To help to teach us how to read and write
We're the lucky ones, we're getting out of the rut
But so many others are still stuck
It's for their right to read that we will fight.

When you can't read or write you live in shame
You think it's your fault and you take the blame
But listen now to what we have to say
It's the education system that needs changing
It sure could use some rearranging
Oh Canada - you've got a bill to pay

We got together and we wrote this song
We're inviting you to sing along
To put an end to illiteracy in our land
You can be a tutor, one to one
You can lobby the government for more funds
There's a way for each of us to take a stand.

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For music to "Literacy Together" and to Arlene Mantle's song "Candles in the Wind," see pages 33 and 35.

CHALLENGING RACISM

MORNING SESSION

Resource Person: Arun Mukherjee, teaches mature students at York University, especially women returning to school. She is currently researching race and feminist theory.

Arun began her presentation by saying that in order to speak our own voice, we need to discover it. Arun discovered and began to falteringly speak her own voice in her mid thirties.

I saw that I was doubly colonized: by cultural imperialism, and by patriarchy. I grew up in newly independent India, where roots of imperialism are deep. The new India parroted messages of Western metropolises — London, Paris, New York, and education did not give Indian students the tools they needed to deal with their own history and identity.

I came to Canada at the age of 25. I experienced the deep disjunction of being non-white in a white land. Late in my academic education, after I already had my Ph.D, I saw that there were non-whites writing. Until then I had never had the opportunity to read a book by a non-white man or woman.

One eye-opening experience occurred when a male friend studying at OISE saw a text and said, "Look what they're saying about India — it's false!" This is when I began to see text as a tool through which we control society, not just a means of disseminating knowledge.

I got involved with others in a project called "Ontario Secondary Schools Perceptions of India". The project examined texts for ideology — discovered 'them' and 'us' as categories of analysis. There was religious stereotyping of Hindus. Many texts said India was poor because of fatalism, superstition and religion, but made no connections with 300 years of colonial rule. During this project, I read a book by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. He said, "History is always written from the point of view of the conquerors." I became aware that our concept of history is not just made up of facts, but facts distorted through the conquerors' lens.

With this, I became aware of myself as a non-white person. I experienced the pain of being defined as 'other'. I began to question what was being presented as universal truths. This was the beginning of my own true education.

When we're growing up in our own culture we tend to accept how the world is presented. In moving, we become dislocated, begin to ask questions. What do you do once you begin to ask these questions? How do you research answers when the alternative forms of knowledge aren't available? How do marginalized people preserve voices that society doesn't value?

How do I, as an educator, address racism at the same time that, as an educator, I am in a struggle for survival? How do I keep myself employed? The departments at the university are white. Non-white educators are not hired by universities. Affirmative action is not taken seriously. We've begun to ask how hiring criteria work against women. We haven't begun to ask how hiring criteria keep visible minority women and men out.

I am on a contractually limited appointment. I still don't have a permanent job after teaching for almost nine years. I am always aware that if I speak up against racism, I might offend those who hire me and hurt my chances of being hired again.

When you are non-permanent, you don't have control over what you teach. You are given curriculum for a course and told to go teach it. American Literature, for example, isn't really American Literature. It's male, New England, white. When you teach a black female writer, it upsets the framework of education. It

indicates exclusions and the non-representative nature of knowledge. For example, Native Indians have a rich oral tradition, yet it is not thought of as literature or art or culture. When we make students aware of gaps, they can go outside the classroom to look for knowledge beyond the limits of curriculum.

These practices are liberating, but they have a price. Course evaluations are mixed. Some, especially students who have not seen their own identity included before, say it is the best course they have ever taken. Others evaluate the course poorly. They say it is too radical, that there is too much emphasis on black writers (one text out of 12!), too much politics, not enough technique. These are students whom the system sees as 'good students' because they stay within the vocabulary of their disciplines, and adopt dualisms such as politics versus technique; message versus form.

Then there is a middle level of freedom: the experience of a battle won, a war lost. York University has a tradition of team teaching — interdisciplinary integration. In the context of team teaching, I was involved in planning a course entitled "Concepts of Gender in the Western World". It had been offered for ten years when I came to it. The dynamics of the team were constructed by the fact that I was the junior member and on contract, while the course director was the senior member, white and in a tenured position. The course director said that we were co-directors of the course.

I knew we didn't have the same power, but still I used the opportunity to point out that there were no non-white writers in the curriculum. The senior member explained that that was because we were studying the "West" and went on to say the West was not geographical, but Western culture which was Judeo-Christian culture. So I suggested we include some non-white texts as critiques of Judeo-Christian culture and asked if I could teach a text about growing up black and female. The text I chose allowed me to deconstruct the underlying theory of the course. It posed questions: Whose experience is presented as women's? Which women are oppressors? Which women are oppressed?

Even when you're locked in a corner, you can do something: sow seeds of doubt — that's enough for adult learners. They'll go out and work for their own learning.

CHALLENGING RACISM

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Christine Almeida is active in community-based literacy. She continues to look for ways for the voices of people of colour to be heard in the field of literacy.

During the afternoon session, Christine led a discussion with the following objectives:

1. To locate where racism surfaces in our literacy contexts

2. To explore our role in challenging racism

The following is a summary of the discussion:

It is easiest to recognize racism in individual interactions. Just seeing the world from a particular point of privilege in society can be racist. When we don't experience racism, it's harder to recognize it. If we're from outside minority groups, it may be harder to know what our role is in intervening in a racist incident.

Many people have internalized racism. Minority groups may use the same stereotypes as the dominant

group (for example, a black student complains that a black tutor is not good enough). Racial tensions and denigrating stereotypes also exist between different minority racial groups. As well, race does not account for different ethnicities, cultures, countries of origin and histories (for example, Black Nova Scotians, Black Caribbeans, Black Somalians).

- Educational programs for immigrants and visible minorities are structurally peripheral in the education system and are underfunded. Being underfunded is the same as being undervalued.
- Using European/Eurocentric ideas of efficiency and order to judge people from other cultures may be a cultural imposition.
- There are different dynamics of working one-to-one compared to working in groups.
- When we allow different possibilities for speaking out, we affect how people talk about racism in the situation.
- As a facilitator, how do my assumptions of where people will end up in society contribute to getting them there?
- Is a practice racist only if it's intentionally racist?

What helps us speak out against racism?

- When we see racism interfering with people's learning, we have to act. We don't have a choice.
- Hearing from people who suffer from racist practices makes us feel that we have to do something.
- We must be aware of the injustice of racism by asking "Who is losing and who is benefitting from this practice, from this structure?"
- We must ask questions such as "What's behind that attitude?" rather than just give solutions.
- Women from a minority need to take the responsibility to learn about how racism affects other minorities.
- White women have a responsibility to speak out because they are in a place of safety among white women.
- Others in places of safety must speak out as well.
- We must be willing to be challenged, and must acknowledge that being challenged will be uncomfortable.

What holds us back from speaking against racism?

- not knowing what to do
- confusion
- lack of training to help us understand and act on racism
- fear among non-white women of being cast out by white friends
- fear among white women of feeling hurt when they are challenged
- doubt among part-time teachers about whether they have the right to intervene
- hesitation in choosing a battle: who and when to fight
- the question of what will be lost if we say something versus what will be gained if we don't

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gathering Our Voice: How can facilitators act on racism?

Where are the spaces to act amid the constraints and contradictions of our literacy practice?

1. We can use materials that reflect the lives of people of colour and cultural minorities.

2. We can use the Race Relations Handbook being developed by the Toronto Board of Education (Alok Mukherjee et al.).

3. We can let institutions know what we expect them to do, so their practice will be anti-racist. We can challenge the administration.

4. Community-based literacy workers can have a staff development day when we look at what hiring practices would be needed so we don't always end up hiring white university-educated women.

5. We need more opportunities like this workshop to probe issues more deeply so we can develop our thinking.

At this point, the participants agreed that a letter should be written to the conference planning committee recommending workshops on racism for literacy facilitators.

READING: "The Uses of Anger"

The following is an excerpt from "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism", an essay by Audre Lorde, a Black American writer. The excerpt is reprinted with permission from **Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde**, published by The Crossing Press (Freedom, CA, 1984). The essay is copyright by Audre Lorde, 1984.

"**Women respond to racism.** My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

"Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation....

"Mainstream communication does not want women, particularly white women, responding to racism. It wants racism to be accepted as an immutable given in the fabric of your existence, like evening time or the common cold.

"So we are working in a context of opposition and threat, the cause of which is certainly not the angers which lie between us, but rather that virulent hatred leveled against all women, people of Color, lesbians and gay men, poor people — against all of us who are seeking to examine the particulars of our lives as we resist our oppressions, moving toward coalition and effective action....

"Women of Color in America have grown up within a symphony of anger, at being silenced, at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart. We have had to learn to move through them and use them for strength and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not learn this difficult lesson did not survive. And part of my anger is always libation for my fallen sisters....

"But the strength of women lies in recognizing differences between us as creative, and in standing to those distortions which we inherited without blame, but which are now ours to alter. The angers of women can transform difference through insight into power. For anger between peers births change, not destruction, and the discomfort and sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth...

"For it is not the anger of Black women which is dripping down over this globe like a diseased liquid. It is not my anger that launches rockets, spends over sixty thousand dollars a second on missiles and other agents of war and death, slaughters children in cities, stockpiles nerve gas and chemical bombs, sodomizes our daughters and our earth. It is not the anger of Black women which corrodes into blind, dehumanizing power, bent upon the annihilation of us all unless we meet it with what we have, our power to examine and to redefine the terms upon which we will live and work; our power to envision and to reconstruct, anger by painful anger, stone upon heavy stone, a future of pollinating difference and the earth to support our choices."

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ADVOCATING FOR MOTHER TONGUE

MORNING SESSION

***Resource Person:** Evelyn Murialdo facilitates study circles in mother tongue literacy. She is an international literacy specialist and board member of the Movement for Canadian Literacy.*

Evelyn began her presentation by describing her experience as an elementary school teacher, and as a adult educator in English as a Second Language, literacy and study circles.

I find that it is very difficult to separate culture from a person's experience, to put it aside. Culture is one of the most important aspects of a learning setting. We cannot acquire a culture, or have ours modified without difficulty. We can only begin to acquire another culture when we feel good about our own. I define culture as everything we have learned from the moment we were born, through living and reading. People have a right to learn literacy in their mother tongue.

The struggle for mother tongue can be compared to the struggle for Heritage Language programs. Why did parents see Heritage Languages as so important? Do they see the need for mother tongue literacy for themselves? Ten or twelve years ago, I worked to organize Heritage Language classes. This struggle brought out attitudes about language, culture and race. For example, organizers were accused of dividing children, and teachers complained about the extra time required. While struggling for Heritage Languages, people were really struggling for multiculturalism.

Parents and children have a different history, a different problem. The parents did not have formal basic education but were shaped by their culture. The children have formal basic education and do not know their own cultural heritage. Advocacy for Heritage Language focused on equal space and status for many languages. The issues of language and culture were the only issues that could mobilize parents. Gradually, parents began to go into the schools to meet the principals and to participate in policy-making. They spoke the language they knew best — their mother tongue — to speak for the language and culture for their children. Through the struggle, parents learned to participate. They began to act as citizens of Canada. Now many active parent associations exist such as the Greek Parents Association and the Chinese Parents Association. The battle for Heritage Language was won. Now an integrated high school is planned.

In contrast, no funding as such is available for mother tongue literacy. The literacy movement is very unicultural, uniracial, and unilingual. It is often unwilling to give space to mother tongue literacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What is the role of Mother Tongue Literacy Advocates?

1. All literacy organizations (including MTML and MCL) must integrate mother tongue literacy practitioners and learners.

2. Mother tongue literacy practitioners and learners must beintegrated in the planning of curriculum and conferences.

3. Criteria for hiring literacy practitioners should be multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual.

4. Staff training for literacy practitioners needs to be linked to multiracial, multicultural and multilingual skills.

5. The issue of mother tongue must be raised within organizations related to literacy.

6. Programs for children should be provided. Mother tongue literacy should be part of childcare for classes, for the families of adult learners.

7. Resource collections in libraries should be built and expanded to be available to learners.

8. The Toronto Board of Education should include mother tongue literacy facilitators and outreach workers in staff development opportunities.

ADVOCATING FOR MOTHER TONGUE

AFTERNOON SESSION

Resource Person: Maria Adamczyk is a mother tongue facilitator with experience in Toronto and Argentina. She is an adult educator and community organizer.

Maria led the discussion during the afternoon session. The following is a summary of the discussion.

What kind of voice does mother tongue have? What are the questions and the thoughts?

The voice of mother tongue is very quiet at this time. It's getting louder and clearer, but it's still very soft.

The philosophy that the facilitator should be of the same language and culture as the learners is not widely understood or generally accepted.

In any E.S.L. class where English is the language of the instructor, the students tend to lose interest. Why?

Sometimes facilitators do not know if the members of the class are illiterate in their own language. It is very important that the facilitator know the language of those they are teaching. It is best to have homogeneous groups of learners, but this is not always the case.

Why do learners lose interest when English is the language of instruction?

Their identity, their culture is being lost. Sometimes it's due to lack of communication: the speaking is only one-way, from teacher to learner. Another problem is that the learners in E.S.L. cannot keep up after the first basic classes. They cannot cope with English (a foreign language) and literacy skills at the same time. Many of these learners are not entirely illiterate but their literacy skills need development. This development must happen in their own language first.

What do you say to people who say: "I don't want to learn mother tongue literacy, I want to learn English"?

Right now one option is to choose facilitators who speak the language of the learners, and who are from their culture.

We need to respect people's wishes. Some learners want to learn English and prefer an E.S.L. Literacy class. They say "I don't want to learn how to read and write in Spanish or Portuguese. I want to learn English." But the voice of mother tongue literacy is being repressed. Can you help a person to value their own language? Attitudes reflect society. Mother tongues are not val-

ued and respected. When people feel it is important to read and write in their own language, they will want it.

Values depend on power. It's very much a political struggle. People equate being English with being part of the people with power. Do we look at the power struggle? Do we look at the structures of our society?

Who is going to tell the learners that their culture and language are important and valuable?

One person can't do it. The facilitator has the first impact, so it's their job initially. New-comers often discredit what facilitators say because they realize it's coming from an English speaker who is already empowered. Is this how facilitators are perceived? Do we only talk down to the learners? The media can give the same message. All of us have to collaborate. It is important that learners talk to one another.

Where is the Toronto Board putting its resources? How much is the Toronto Board putting into mother tongue literacy?

There is support for the Multilingual Literacy Centre. Much more is needed.

Why mother tongue?

We need to know what works best. We haven't done enough evaluation of mother tongue programs. We do know that E.S.L. classes lose learners because the lack of basic literacy prevents them from understanding what is going on: they become frustrated and drop out.

Mother tongue literacy is important. People must be able to respect their own language and culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can the Toronto Board of Education do?

1. Find out the ideal number of learners for a mother tongue literacy class and adjust funding formulas to accommodate this size.

2. Allocate funding for collections of materials in mother tongue, and for adapting them to literacy.

3. Hire facilitators who are fluent in the mother tongue of the learners, and familiar with their culture, so that learners can identify with and value their culture.

4. Help the Multilingual Literacy Centre to develop, by supporting it and working cooperatively with it.

5. Increase outreach for mother tongue: fund contact with communities in their own language, through schools, media, community centres, with flyers in banks, stores, etc.

6. Train facilitators for mother tongue literacy classes. The training should be at least six months long, with a certificate for completion. As much training as possible should be in the language that the facilitators will be teaching.

7. Develop small, decentralized resource centres for mother tongue literacy.

8. Put mother tongue literacy on the conference agenda for next year.

9. Look at these recommendations in one year to measure their progress.

READING: "Educating Priscilla"

In the following excerpt from "Educating Priscilla", Priscilla Hewitt describes the experience of being denied access to education in her mother tongue. It is reprinted with permission from **Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme**, Volume 9, Numbers 3 & 4, published by York University (Toronto, 1988).

"My earliest memory is of sitting in the back seat of a car. It is night-time and we are following another car ahead of us. My cat, Butchie, is in the back window of the first car and I can see his eyes glowing in the glare of our headlights. We are on our way to the reserve. My grandparents, my uncle, my mom, my four brothers, my younger sister and I have decided to leave the City of Sarnia because we hope that life will be better on the reserve. My dad has died and we are having trouble making it without him. We're happy and we do our best. As has

always been our way, our extended family shares what little we've got. But money is short and there are many mouths to feed, so the entire family unit uproots itself and away we go to what we hope are greener pastures. We feel happy because we are pulling together.

"But happiness is short-lived and my next major memory is of residential school. We are sent to the Brantford Mohawk Institute. It seems that the house allotted to us on the reserve is too small, so the Indian Agent, in his wisdom, decides to send those in our family who are of school age to residential school. I am only five years old. That doesn't matter. The Indian Agent represents Indian Affairs and they make our decisions for us. Life is different at the Mush Hole, as we call it. We don't sit around the kitchen table anymore watching Grandma make meals (I'm too young to help, but I watch because later on, I'll know what to do). Instead, we line up whenever the bell goes and we file into a big room with tables and chairs and eat what is given to us. It's porridge most mornings, thus, the name Mush Hole. I don't hear my family laughing and joking in Ojibway all the time. Now the only time I see my family is when I spot my brothers in the large dining room at mealtime. My mom wants to visit us, but the Mush Hole is a long way from the Reserve and she has no way to get back and forth. We all have to speak English here because it would interfere with our education if we spoke Ojibway. Sure is tough trying to learn a new language without anyone really teaching us how. Now we don't sit around the wood-stove in the evenings listening to Grandpa tell tales of long ago. Instead, we line up at a certain time to use the washroom, then we have to go to bed."

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WRAP UP

READING: "Musing with Mothertongue"

Poet Daphne Marlatt considers the importance of language in this excerpt from her essay, "musing with mothertongue". It is reprinted with permission. The essay first appeared in **Touch to my Tongue**, published by Longspoon Press (Edmonton, 1984).

"the beginning: language, a living body we enter at birth, sustains and contains us. it does not stand in place of anything else, it does not replace the bodies around us. placental, our flat land, our sea, it is both place (where we are situated) and body (that contains us), that body of language we speak, our mothertongue. it bears us as we are born in it, into cognition.

"language is first of all for us a body of sound. leaving the water of the mother's womb with its one dominant sound, we are born into this other body whose multiple sounds bathe our ears from the moment of our arrival. we learn the sounds before we learn what they say: a child will speak babytalk in pitch patterns that accurately imitate the sense patterns of her mothertongue. an adult who cannot read or write will speak his mothertongue without being able to say what a particular morpheme or even word in a phrase means. we learn nursery rhymes without understanding what they refer to. we repeat skipping songs significant for their rhythms. gradually we learn how the sounds of our language are active as meaning & then we go on learning for the rest of our lives what the words are actually saying...

"like the mother's body, language is larger than us & carries us along with it. it bears us, it births us, insofar as we bear with it. if we are poets we spend our lives discovering not just what *we* have to say but what language is saying as it carries us with it. in etymology we discover a history of verbal relations (a family tree, if you will) that has preceded us & given us the world we live in. the given, the immediately presented, as at birth — a given name a given world. we know language structures our world & in a crucial sense we cannot see what we cannot verbalize, as the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf and ethnolinguistics has pointed out to us. here we are truly contained within the body of our mothertongue. & even the physicists, chafing at these limits, say that the glimpse physics now gives us of the nature of the universe cannot be conveyed in a language based on the absolute difference between a noun & a verb. poetry has been demonstrating this for some time....

"language thus speaking (i.e. inhabited) relates us, "takes us back" to where we are, as it relates us to the world in a living body of verbal relations. articulation: seeing the connections (& the thighbone & the hipbone, etc.). putting the living body of language together means putting the world together, the world we live in: an act of composition, an act of birthing, us, uttered & outered there in it."

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EVALUATION OF THE DAY

At the end of the day, participants were asked to complete a written evaluation of the conference. The following is a summary of the evaluations received.

General Comments:

- We made many good recommendations. I hope they will not stop here.
- I would like to see the Board sponsor a similar opportunity for learners, including childcare, transportation costs and the same quality of food.
- Universal problems involving funding, staff problems, and learning conditions always seem to get in the way of further development of all issues surrounding literacy and E.S.L.
- It was a very informative day. More time is needed for the workshops. Well planned. Lillian's poems and Arlene's song were the icing on the cake.
- Very good facilitators: they know their work.
- I enjoyed the conference. I learned a lot.
- I wanted to attend other workshops but there was no time. The conference planning should have allowed participants to attend one workshop in the morning and a different topic in the afternoon.
- It was not long enough!

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE

Resource People:

- more of the same people — great people and themes!
- literacy learners
- more representatives of the multicultural community
- link to other community-based activists
- someone working in refugee concerns
- learners

Workshop Topics:

- racism — it should be a topic at every conference
- development of materials for the multicultural community
- language, mother tongue, cross-cultural communication
- addressing sexism
- special issues for women in literacy
- integrating feminist analysis
- safety in the workplace through literacy and E.S.L.
- integrating adults with disabilities
- critical consciousness and literacy
- dyslexia

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READINGS

Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre, Bell Hooks, South End Press, Boston, MA, 1984.

In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Carol Gilligan, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1982.

in the feminine: women and words conference proceedings 1983, University of Alberta Department of English, Edmonton, 1985.

Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives, Carolyn Steedman, Virago Press, London, 1986.

Letters to Marcia: A Teacher's Guide to Anti-Racist Education, Enid Lee, Cross-Cultural Communication Centre, Toronto, 1985.

Lifeline to Literacy: People with Disabilities Speak Out, TVOntario, Toronto, 1989.

Literacy in Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice, International Council for Adult Education, Toronto, 1987.

Man Made Language, Dale Spender, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985.

Multiculturalism in the Workplace, Barb Thomas, Y.W.C.A., Toronto, 1986.

Opening Time, The Gatehouse Project, Manchester, 1986.
(Available from: The Gatehouse Project, St. Luke's, Sawley Road, Miles Platting, Manchester M10 8DB, U.K.)

Seeing Ourselves: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Culture, Carl E. James, Coach House Press, Toronto, 1989.
(Available only from: Sheridan College, Department of Instructional and Human Resources, 1430 Trafalgar Road, Oakville, Ontario, L6H 2L1 Telephone (416) 845-9430, ex. 277)

Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde, Audre Lord, The Crossing Press, Freedom CA, 1984.

Touch to my Tongue, Daphne Marlatt, Longspoon Press, Edmonton, 1984.

"Women and Literacy", **Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme**, (Volume 9, numbers 3 & 4), York University, Toronto, 1988.

Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind, M.F. Belenky, D.M. Clinchy, N.R. Goldberger, J. M. Tarule, Basic Books, New York, 1986.

Shuffle Feel

CANDLES IN THE WIND

CHO.
G G D
They lit their can-dles in the wind kept them
G C G
bur-ning their whole life long. For a can-dle to burn, to
D Em D C
burn in the wind The flame's got ta be strong The
Em D C G D VERSE
flames gotte be strong (VERSE 1) so ma-ny
VS
G D C
wo-men long a- go o-pened doors, and now we
G G D
grow. They raised their voi-ces Raised them high
C D G D
oh so high with freedom's cry

CANDLES IN THE WIND (cont'd.)

2. Seeing a sister, as a friend
   Working together, our talents blend
   We raise our voices, raise them high
   Oh so high with freedom's cry.

3. Time for our babies, time for play
   Time to plan our brand new day
   We raise our voices, raise them high
   Oh so high with freedom's cry.

4. Time for reflection, getting strong
   Time for singing our own song
   We raise our voices, raise them high
   Oh so high with freedom's cry.

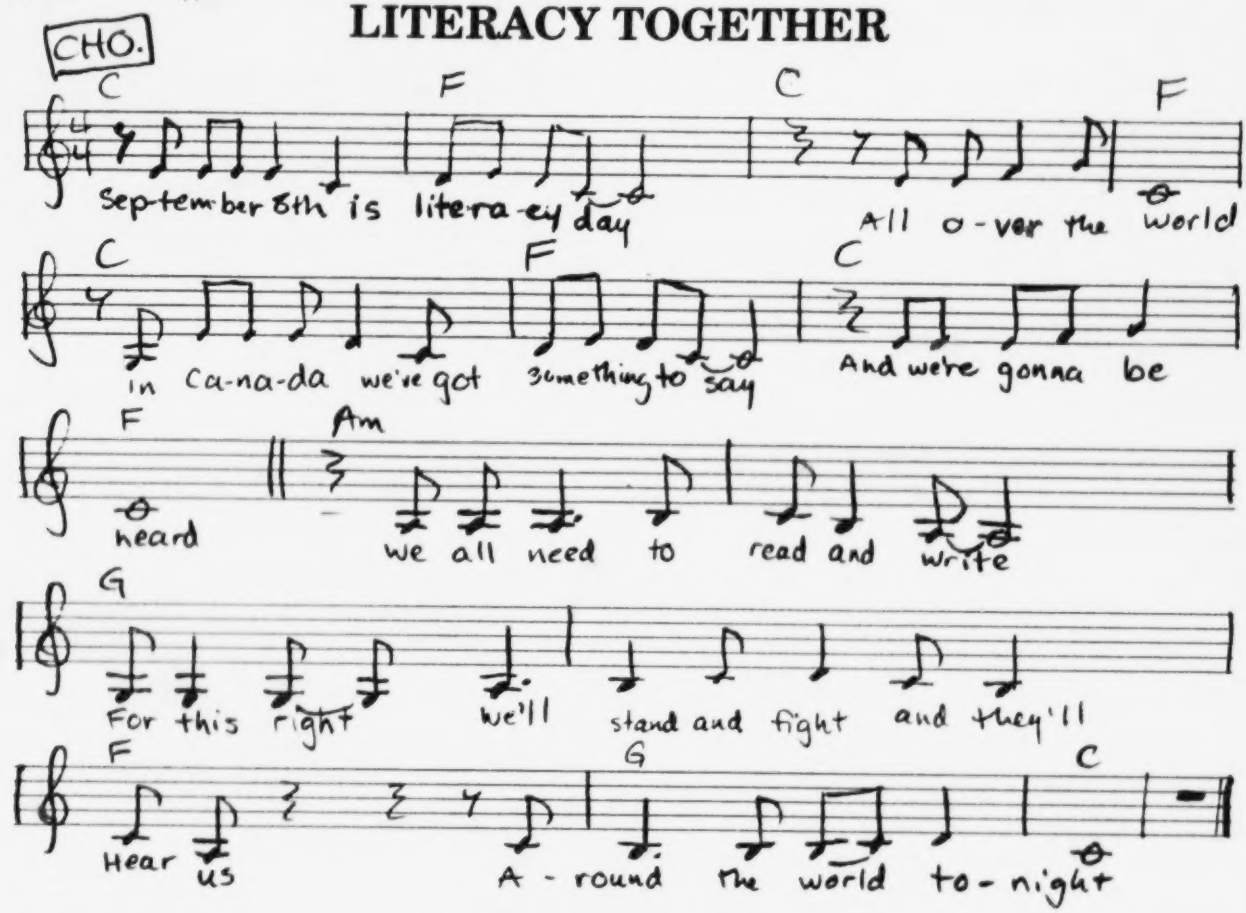
5. See all the women across this land
   Lighting their candles, taking a stand
   They raise their voices, raise them high
   Oh so high with freedom's cry.

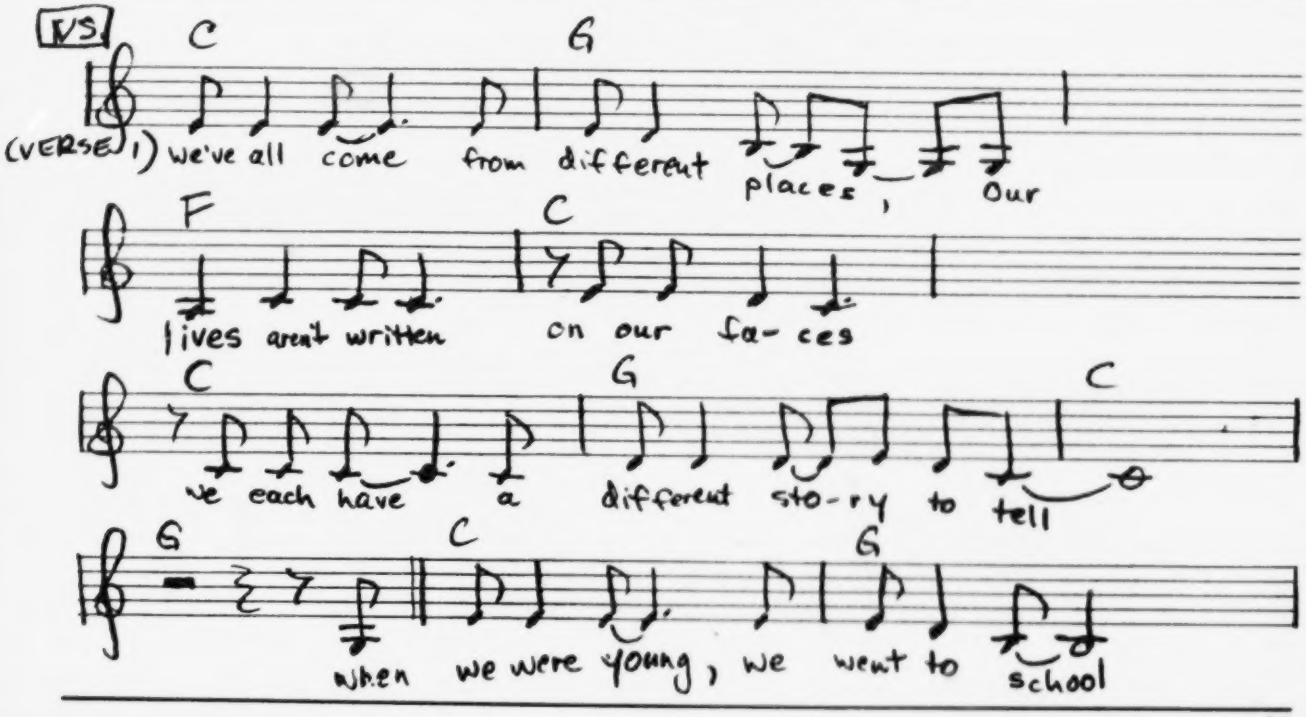
6. And so to each, each one of us
   We've got a legacy in trust
   To raise our voices, raise them high
   Oh so high, with freedom's cry.

Music & Lyrics, © Arlene Mantle, Procan, 1985. Written for Positive Images, Women's Photography Collective, Edmonton, Alberta. Available on album, 'CLASS ACT' — ARLENE MANTLE

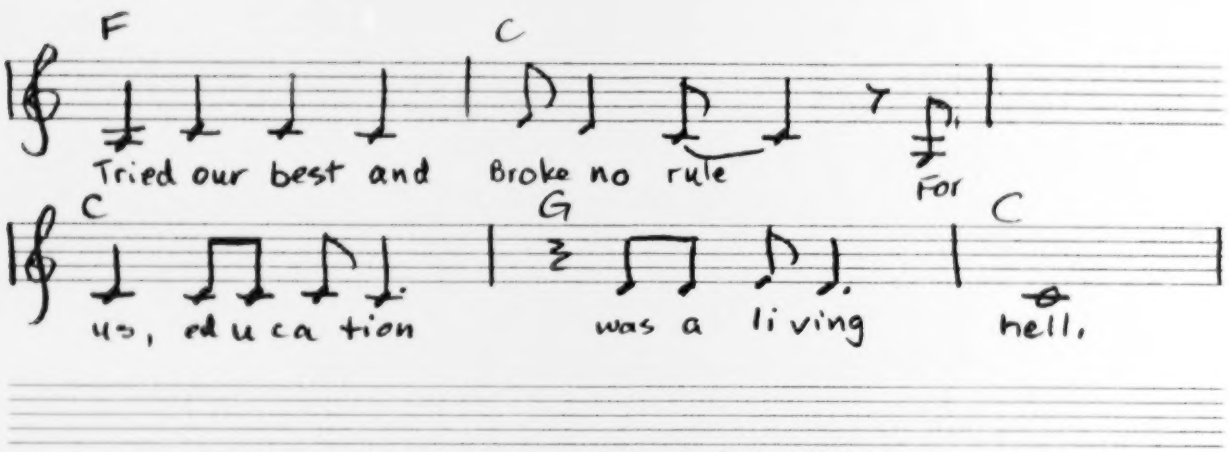
Quasi-calypso

LITERACY TOGETHER


CHO.
C F C F
September 8th is literacy day All over the world
C F C
In Canada we've got something to say And we're gonna be
F Am
heard we all need to read and write
G
For this right we'll stand and fight and they'll
F G C
Hear us A-round the world to-night


VS.
C G
(VERSE 1) We've all come from different places, Our
F C
lives aren't written on our faces
C G C
We each have a different story to tell
G C G
When we were young, we went to school

LITERACY TOGETHER (cont'd.)



2. We're workers, learners, mothers, fathers,
Volunteers who took the time to bother
To help to teach us how to read and write
We're the lucky ones, gettin' out of the rut
But so many others are still stuck
It's for their right to read that we will fight.

3. When you can't read or write, you live in shame
You think it's your fault and you take the blame
But listen now, to what we have to say.
It's the education system that needs changing
It sure could use some rearranging
Oh Canada — you've got a debt to pay.

4. We got together and we wrote this song
We're inviting you to sing along
To put an end to illiteracy in our land
You can be a tutor, one to one,
You can lobby the government for more funds
There's a way for each of us to take a stand.

Music & Lyric facilitation, © Arlene Mantle, Procan, 1987. Produced in a collective session with adult learners, tutors and literacy program staff

ARLENE MANTLE is available to do songwriting workshops with community groups, schools, etc. She is also available for performance, and accompanies herself on guitar. She has recorded two albums, 'Class Act' and 'In Solidarity', along with several other cassettes.

For booking information or to order cassettes, songbooks or albums, please contact: Joyce Pate, Manager, On The Line Music Collective, c/o Bathurst Street Centre for Peace & Justice, 736 Bathurst Street, #212, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2R4 Tel. (416) 537-7702 or 537-5631.